

PEOPLE & THINGS

MR. J. EDGAR HOOVER, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington for the past twenty-nine years, is a remarkable man. He has created a wonderful machine which operates with efficiency, loyalty and incorruptibility and which, during the war, rendered such valuable services to Britain that its chief was created a K.B.E. But Mr. Hoover's many admirers here are confused by the equivocal part he appears to be playing behind the scenes of the Great Red Witch-Hunt and by the obscurity which surrounds his relationship with the activities of Senator McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee.

There is only one man in America who is in possession of all the facts on espionage and subversive activities in the United States and that man is Mr. Hoover. If the Administration and the public want the truth, why is Mr. Hoover not asked for it?

Dead Man's Dossier

THE current hullabaloo about the White case could surely have been avoided if Mr. Hoover had been asked to divulge the whole history of this case and not just the bare facts of Mr. Truman's connection with it. For the record, I believe it was British Intelligence that first warned America about Mr. White, and that this warning was personally conveyed by the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, to President Roosevelt, who laughed off that warning. Then the Gouzenko case broke and I understand Mr. White's name figured in a formidable list of suspected Communist agents in America which was sent to Mr. Hoover and thence to President Truman.

In America, no immediate action resulted. In England, as a consequence of Gouzenko's revelations, Fuchs was arrested. Reluctance to give credit to British Intelligence is not sufficient reason for keeping these facts, if they are true, from the American public. It is time to stop making party capital out of this dead man's dossier. It is up to Mr. Hoover to lay the ghost of Harry Dexter White.

Who Stays Home?

THE whipping-up of "back-woodsmen" peers to help the Government overwhelm the opposition to their television policy inspired me to request an erudite friend to delve into the latest "Roll of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal." Eliminating the five Royal Dukes, twenty-six Spiritual peers and five double entries, the putative strength of the House of Lords is 837.

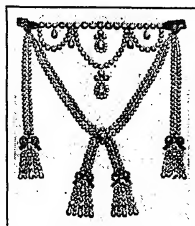
But my friend's inquisition reveals that, excluding minors, no fewer than forty-three have failed even to apply for writ of summons allowing them to attend and vote. A breakdown of this figure reveals the following non-starters: seven out of twenty Dukes, one out of twenty-seven Marquesses, seven out of 134 Earls, four out of ninety-nine Viscounts, twenty-four out of 530 Barons. Again excluding minors the effective voting strength of the Lords is thus reduced to 770. Of these 244 voted in Thursday's division.

Humpf!

The Thing

BEFORE the Queen entered her plane the aircraft was completely stripped and every item

By ATTICUS



"COLLIER DE LA REINE"

This contemporary engraving of the great diamond necklace, the scandal of whose sham sale to the Queen of France and subsequent theft did great harm to the good name of Marie-Antoinette, is displayed at the Versailles Exhibition at the headquarters of the National Book League in Albemarle Street. It was found by Mr. Adrian McLaughlin in Moscow. The necklace, designed by the jewellers Boehme and Bassenge in 1783, is seven inches deep by six inches wide and contains some 650 fine Brazilian diamonds. Pale blue velvet bows allow the necklace to be adjusted and worn as a collar in the fashion of the time. The price was 1,160,000 livres, but the jewellers were never paid and it was disposed of piecemeal in London. The major part of it now belongs to the Duke of Sutherland.

checked and double-checked before being put aboard. Even the cases of food and medicines were carefully probed. There remained one mysterious brown paper parcel six inches by three inches, addressed "To be delivered on board" to a lady of the household. The addressee was telephoned. Tension mounted when she expressed ignorance of the contents.

The parcel looked even more sinister when Scotland Yard revealed that the contents were metal and impervious to X-ray examination. The label showed it had been posted at a West End store. They were urgently telephoned. What one might call "a dusty answer" was returned. The "bomb" was a tin of talcum powder sent by a friend to a friend as a parting gift.

Teletics . . .

IF commercial television is born out of the present sound and fury, the fortunes of Sir Robert Boothby and Mr. Michael Foot will be made. Estimates of their audiences vary between five and seven million and their political influence is out of all proportion both to their status in Parliament and to that of any member of a democratic system of government except its leader.

Alarmed by the impact of these latter-day Marc Antonys, and united by the common emergency, the Tory and Labour Parties have unanimously decided to ration them to one performance a month. But it will not be surprising if they are sought out by alternative sponsors. May we be spared the Elizabethan

gusto, wit and massive good-looks of Boothby harnessed to the promotion of fruit-salts, while Foot, brilliant, bright and bitter, is enlisted against the perils of night-starvation.

. . . and the Politician

THE power of television was forcibly demonstrated the other day at Whites. Boothby was dining with a Minister of the Crown and they decided to make a last-minute attempt to get two seats at the Palladium. The chances of success were remote and there was some discussion as to which name would carry more weight with the box office. The Secretary of State was prepared to back himself. A handsome bet was made, and a message was sent in his name. "House Full" was the crushing reply.

The same request was then sent in the name of Sir Robert Boothby. After some delay, the waiter came back with the announcement: "The manager presents his compliments to Sir Robert and has reserved two stalls for him in the front row."

After Piltdown

ON the heels of the Piltdown exposure, Germany's biggest art-forgery case comes before the courts next month when three painters and an architect will stand their trial at Luebeck in the British Zone. The prosecution alleges that when the artists Lothar Malskat and Dietrich Fey were commissioned in 1945 to restore the famous thirteenth-century murals in the historic church of St. Mary in Luebeck they were anxious that the work—and their salaries—should not come to an end too soon, and that they went on restoring "from memory" using a German film star, Hansi Knoteck, as a model for Gothic madonnas and angels.

Work was finally completed in 1951 and the experts and the ecclesiastical authorities were so impressed that a special commemorative stamp bearing a reproduction of one of the "frescoes" was issued by the German Post Office. The alleged deception first came to light when someone noticed that the two artists had painted in turkeys, which were unknown in Europe in the thirteenth century.

The Filiberta Smile

TO add to the melodious thunder of falling idols I am happy to report that the proprietary rights of Mona Lisa del Giocondo to the famous smile are in serious dispute. In a scholarly thesis, the Italian artist Carlo Pedretti of Bologna maintains that Leonardo da Vinci's model was a relative of the King of France, a certain Princess Filiberta of Savoy, who married one of the Medici family.

Pedretti's case is that the widow's veil in the famous picture would not have been worn by Mona Lisa until she was fifty, when her husband in fact died. But Princess Filiberta was a widow at the age of eighteen when her husband was murdered in church by a rival Medici faction, the Pazzi brothers. Moreover, while it was fashionable for Frenchwomen to pluck their eyebrows, such a practice would have scandalised the Florentines. Finally, Pedretti maintains that Vasari, the accepted authority for the identification of Mona Lisa never even saw the picture.

I cannot recall such a good season for hunting the experts.

Schizophrenia

A FRIEND back from Paris claims to have discovered a vital clue to the present confused state of France: All the Metro doors marked "FULL" also push